

Wheaton Urban District Advisory Committee
Meeting – October 13, 2009
Mid-County Regional Center – 2424 Reddie Drive – Wheaton, Maryland 20902

Members Present: Brett Schneider, Chair; Erik Aldrette; Linda Amendt; Randy McDonald; Marian Fryer; Dan Somma, Vice Chair; Janet Yu; Tameka Lucas; Jeannette Feldner; Harold Weinberg

Staff Present: Natalie Cantor, Director, Mid-County Regional Center; Carol McKenzie, Assistant Director, Mid-County Regional Center; Rob Klein, Director, Wheaton Redevelopment Program; Gary Stith, Deputy Director of Planning and Special Projects, Department of General Services; Gwen Haney, Community Outreach, Mid-County Regional Center

Call to Order: Chair Brett Schneider called the meeting to order at 4:33 pm. Motion to approve September minutes: Jeanette Feldner 1st, Marian Fryer 2nd.

Membership: Announcements went out for the current vacancy representing large businesses. Tamika offered to help with the interviews.

Director's Report: Natalie Cantor, Director, Mid-County Regional Center

- Criminal activity has gone down significantly in the past three months according to County and Transit police.
- Thanks to Janet Yu for serving on the County Executive's Panhandling Committee.
- The Urban Land Institute's Tech Institute Panel said Wheaton will never be a predominately office market. More information on the market analysis is to come.
- WRAC held it's meeting for the County Executive and Council on Nov. 16. Their next meeting, on Nov 9th at 7:00 pm, at Lindsey Ford, will host state and federal officials. The purpose is to educate officials because the Committee, although they may lobby the County Executive, County Council, and Planning Board, they may not lobby either externally or other government agencies.
- WUD had to meet a mid-year savings plan of 2.25% which resulted in a minor lessening of services.

Wheaton Sector Plan Status Update: Gary Stith, Deputy Director of Planning and Special Projects, DGS

About 100 people attended the September 21st meeting and the planners got a lot of good feedback. The plans are moving forward and will go to the Planning Board in mid-November. Marian Fryer will see that the final plan is sent to WUDAC members. Natalie suggested it would help if the Committee advocates for what needs to be in the plan because there are many new faces that may not be fully informed.

Safeway Site Status Update: Marian Fryer

The presentation at Crossway was well attended and the information was well received. Maps that give details are filed with Park & Planning. There was some concern for the building's height.

Bay Area Economics: Marian Fryer

Attended the Wheaton Market Analysis meeting. Residents and stakeholders provided information to Bay Area Economics. Janet Yu attended another Bay Area Economics meetings which was similar.

Technical Assistance panel: Marian Fryer

Attended two meetings; a report overview was provided. The first section of the report focused on Wheaton's stressors and challenges. Points mentioned included the uneasy access to metro, car dominance, lack of coordination among businesses and organizations, and lack of branding. Another section focused on market potential and included the value of anchors, food, music and international

marketplace branding, and a wider distribution of activity. Another section focused on developmental strategies. Long term strategies included WMATA, high density, mixed use, an international anchor.

Retreat Update: Carol McKenzie

The retreat will be held November 10th from 4:00-8:00 pm. A meeting with Conflict Resolution will be held on Friday morning to look at accomplishments and goals. Dan Somma mentioned he would like the Board to be more involved in marketing important Wheaton information. Natalie Cantor suggested focusing on developing partnerships due to current and future limits of funds. Janet Yu suggested discussing the appearance/image of Wheaton local businesses and how to make them more appealing. Natalie Cantor will brief the Board on “Ethics” at the retreat.

Redevelopment Report: Gary Stith, Deputy Director of Planning and Special Projects, DGS

- Working with WMADA to get RFQs for new garage. RFQs were restructured to include three areas.
- The Wheaton pedestrian walkway is almost done. Natalie Cantor is in the process of signing an MOU with the state for iron railings. Natalie Cantor mentioned a wall mural is still being worked on and it has been referred to the Arts and Entertainment Committee for ideas.
- The Fern Street streetscape is making progress. Suggested area businesses could plan a celebration in the spring.

Jeanette Feldner mentioned the appearance of Georgia Ave. businesses needs improvement. Joe Callaway said he has worked with Code Enforcement and property owners regarding this. Chair Schneider said he and Joe Callaway have been working on the same issue with businesses on Grandview Ave. and they now clean up in the evening rather than in the morning.

Harold Weinberg asked if the statistics on the Economic Report could be compared. Pete McGinnity said he would provide this information. He also said that currently, the county has 3.7% vacant space and Wheaton has 3.3%, but Wheaton is rising..

Marketing Report: Carol McKenzie (for Sidney Cooper, Wheaton Urban District)

- The 2nd annual World of Montgomery Festival was a huge success and will probably become a signature event.
- The 1st Flea Market will be held Sunday, November 1st, in the Wheaton triangle. She will send out a flyer.
- A holiday event that would involve businesses is being worked on along with Local First. Chair Schneider suggested the Arts and Entertainment Committee be added to the agenda

MCCAB Report: Randy McDonald, MCCAB Liaison

The community has expresses concern regarding relocation of the fire station. When road construction starts, the fire station will have to be relocated. If the new station is not ready it will be temporarily based at the Park Police headquarters. Currently, the project is doing utility relocation which will take 30 months.

Other Business: Sabrina Goris, Acting Manager of Westfield Mall

- The Mall is 91% leased and committed, its highest in 16 months.
- Hollywood East is expected to open in 4-5 weeks.
- In 3-4 weeks a public announcement will be made on the vacant department store
- The cinema will reopen, hopefully by December 1, with a different vendor.
- Orisman’s lease is good until the end of the month. They are in negotiations.

Meeting was adjourned at 5:45 pm.

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